

Saddam Hussein, the Fighter, the Thinker and the Man

Part II

Chapter 3

SADDAM HUSSEIN AND THE SPECIFICITY OF THE SOCIALIST EXPERIMENT

Socialism is not merely a dream in the hearts of prophets, the minds of philosophers and the imaginations of poets; it has become a tangible reality in societies with millions of inhabitants that make up more than a third of the population of the earth.

The first visions of socialism occurred in the revealed religions, then appeared in the innovations of great thinkers: in John Hus in Bohemia, Thomas Moore in England, and others. Then it became clearer in the works of Owen and St. Simon. Today it is, in its most common form, an expression of the power of man to turn the possible into actual fact.

Its different forms have proliferated in different times and places, and in the same way, the differing images of socialism have proliferated-and it is right that this should be so. The essence of the old human dream is always the same: freedom from class oppression and from social and political domination, and the unfettering of man's potential. Of course the forms that this has taken vary: it is right that this should be so, for societies all over the world are different. If you take a fish out of the sea it will die.

It will also die if you put it in fresh water. The flowers of the valley do not bloom on mountaintops, nor do those of the mountains bloom in the valleys, except for a short while in greenhouses.

It is to be expected that different brands of socialism will proliferate, just as national characteristics proliferate in every society. Only people, who have not yet heard that the earth spins on its axis, will be surprised at this.

But when the sleepers in the cave awaken they will find that a new world has been born outside their cave, and that it grows and flourishes.

It is true that in the Third World, particularly in the Arab World, there are those who claim to be bringing about the socialist dream and who wear false socialist masks, carrying banners that they have stolen. But there is no point in them infiltrating the procession. Their peoples will drag them from behind and cut off their heads. How shall houses built on sand withstand the wind and waves of the raging tempest? Only what is true will endure, and only the best will survive. Only what is of use to the people will remain on earth.

Saddam Hussein is one of the most brilliant leaders in the Third World who lead their peoples amidst the howling gale towards the haven of socialism. The first glimmerings of socialism took the form of justice, equality, and brotherhood among men. He dreamt of these as a boy. He was born in a poor peasant house in the countryside, but as a boy he often returned home without his jacket because he had given it to some playmate that he noticed was ashamed of his own ragged clothes.

But when he reached the age of first responsibilities he realized that millions of children in his country were ashamed of their ragged clothes that could not keep out the cold. He knew that he could not now take off his jacket and give it to them all. But he realized that salvation for all the poor in the villages and towns was possible through socialism: and through socialism alone.

What, then, are the basic hallmarks of socialism, both theoretical and practical, in the eyes of Saddam Hussein?

What are its content and its form? And how could he overcome the problems he faced so as to build storey on top of storey?

We shall let him speak himself through his books. His words are clear, precise and profound. Saddam Hussein says:

"I would like to start by saying that, as revolutionaries in this part of the globe, we must study all revolutionary experiments. It is not a question of study in the way one acquires knowledge

of technology; it is a mutual interaction of give and take. We have the power to give; we should also have the courage and the concern to take.

In this spirit, our interaction must be with the experiments of the whole world; we must not feel that any experiment is greater than our own, or that our experiment alone is greater than all the experiments. We must be humble but not weak, strong but not deceitful. We must interact with the world without looking down our noses at it.

We must interact with them without letting any person or organization whatsoever be considered superior to us. In this spirit, we can interact with other experiments, and can thus have no alternative but to say-with self-esteem but without fanaticism, that whatever the experiments of both the Third World and the world as a whole, we shall not find one that parallels the experiment in which we are engaged.

"Why should we make such a judgment? Let us say simply: events cause principles to ripen. Events move every event interacts with the economic, political and psychological factors in a society, and ideas gush forth. These ideas may contradict the facts; they may be to the effect that events should evolve with revolutionary vigor, or that they should evolve slowly. But in general there can be no new ideas without a pattern of events that change and unfold in accordance with the factors, which we have indicated.

"A man who is the philosopher of his people, then, imposes his ideal upon them. He must be one of them.

He must start from the reality in which he finds them in order to change them. This is a revolutionary reality, not merely a reality of existing circumstances. He takes what is already there so that he may surpass it; he takes the people, the classes, the economic potentialities, and the contradictions within the society in general, and in the light of these, he moulds his ideology. It is absolutely Impossible for any ideologist to go beyond the situation of his society so as to formulate an ideology for the whole world. Even though many ideologists have helped the whole world, that is very different from creating an ideology that will suit the whole world absolutely.

"Let us take as an example of a particular reality the experiment of the Soviet Union fifty-eight years ago [This speech was given in 1976], the U.S.S.R. implemented Marxism but did not halt at that point. They said they were Marxist-Leninists-that is, their Marxism was that of Lenin, the Soviet Russian. It was not purely the Marxism of Marx. Marx lived in a Western society. Why did the U.S.S.R. say that they were Marxist Leninists, and not just Marxists? They said this to affirm that, no matter how helpful the thought of Marx was to the revolutionaries-especially to those in the Supreme Soviet-they could not construct a revolutionary framework for the whole of Soviet society through Marx alone. It was Lenin who constructed such a framework based on the thought of Marx. Why? Because Lenin lived in Russian society and realized it's economic, social and political problems, and the nature of its class struggle. It was he who mobilized the masses and envisaged the form the future would take. He was consequently able to mould an ideology and put it into practice in that particular part of the world. But when we talk of implementing socialism in the Iraqi arena, we must consider socialism from the angle of our society and view it from our own perspective.

A literal transmission of any experiment will harm it, and a literal transmission of socialism will damage our society, for we try to apply Western liberal conceptions to our development as an alternative to the revolutionary path, but we have borrowed them from Western society (1)."

This clear, concise passage pinpoints a matter that is very important-particularly for the non-European reader. This is the question of the transmission and creation of Arab socialist thought. The European reader lives in an intellectual environment where for many years the problem of the intellectual dependence of the first socialist experiments in the world, headed by that of the Soviet Union, has been recognized. Even "euro-communism" in Italy, France and Spain is a new attempt at the betrayed experiment of Dubcek in Czechoslovakia to

renew socialism. At the same time there has been a proliferation of Marxist schools in the West, whose teachings are susceptible to acceptance and refutation. This is not merely because of developments caused by the experiments in China, Vietnam, Albania and Czechoslovakia, and before them in Yugoslavia and Cuba, but because thought itself does not stop evolving and innovating in accordance with the circumstances of each particular area and the changes of every age. Otherwise, humanity would not advance and dialectic would be no more than dead leaves on the grave of thought.

But it is not like this with the orthodox Marxist institutions in the Arab World. The invisible cord that binds them to Soviet ideology has forced them to enter-whether voluntarily or not-the sphere of strategic influence of the Soviet State itself. Their haste to applaud the actions of the Soviets is not the only, or even the most important, sign of this. Their neglect of the nature of the Arab reality itself, their frequent inability to analyze, face or lead it, and their adherence to the ideology of the dialecticians of the Soviet State which ignores some of the most crucial characteristics of the Arab nationalism and Arab unity-are other signs (2).

Saddam Hussein is perhaps quite right when he declares that the continued evolution of dialectic is a necessary condition for progress and development, and describes the mechanical transmitters as having "a reactionary position vis-a-vis practical thought, will, and the general development of human thought, no matter what ambiguities they may use in an attempt to hide their nakedness (3)".

Saddam Hussein is not a petit bourgeois "do-gooder" with a highly selective philosophy, as some adherents of the orthodox 'Marxist establishment have tried to dub the Baathists. They have even taken the concepts of "Petit-Bourgeois" and "selective philosophy" from Western thought without any real attempt to analyze and adapt them to our Arab society. To what extent can the social stratification of a Western capitalist society be applied to our Arab social structures? What are the points of congruity in the two societies? To what extent do the lower and upper classes in each society resemble their counterparts in the other? In what part of the Arab World was there feudalism similar to Western feudalism that was able to provide a womb for capitalism? Can it be said that Arab capitalism will give rise-even supposing that it should so desire--to imperialism on European lines along which that of Europe developed? A deeper analysis of the Arab situation-in its various regional variations-would not only show up the falsity of the analysis of most orthodox Marxist groupings and organizations, but also would show the superficiality of their criteria when applied to Arab society.

The attitude towards private property is one of the basic gauges for measuring the genuineness of an attempt at Socialism. Saddam Hussein says, "We consider one of the fundamental principles of our Party to be the struggle against exploitation and the refutation of those who make property and free enterprise a value that is distinct from the values of Socialism and a truth that cannot be questioned for any reason. This principle is integral to all stages of Socialism (4)." He says elsewhere in the same text, which is entitled 'Private Property and the Responsibility of the State': "Hesitation in the implementation of socialism and in the treatment of private property and free enterprise in a revolutionary way will lead first to submission and then to revisionism (5)".

What, then, is his attitude to private property? And what attitude should be adopted towards it in building socialism as conceived by him? Saddam Hussein says, "One of the most necessary ingredients for building socialism is control of the means of production and their nationalization, so that the material resources may be harnessed for the benefit of socialism, and the right balance may be struck between it and the contribution which free enterprise and private property make to socialism, subject to all the prevailing circumstances and the level of development (6)".

We ask now, what is meant by the contribution made to socialism by free enterprise? Before we reply to this question from his writings, we would like to recall that in some countries of Europe belonging to the Communist Block-Poland and Hungary, but especially Poland-private property plays a vital part in their socialist development, particularly as regards the

private ownership of agriculture, even after the thirty-five years of building a socialist society since the adoption of the communist system at the end of the Second World War.

If it is replied that in these instances private enterprise has been decreed as part of a central plan for socialization, this can easily be refuted when the thirty-five years are considered as a whole. This is what Saddam Hussein says himself: "Free enterprise and private ownership play a limited and central role. The basis for their toleration is not just that they do not conflict with socialism and the building of a new socialist society. They must also serve that goal and co-operate with it in achieving the goals envisaged in a particular stage of change and development. What are needed are not just the regulation of non-exploitative free enterprise by legislation and the general objectives of socialism. It must also be subordinated to the short-term dictates of politics (7)."

It is not a question here of preserving private property or an eventual abolition of it-the latter has only occurred in this form in the U.S.S.R.-it is a question of the size, extent and proper role of private property in the process of socialist transformation. It must not be seen solely in relation to the demands of that transformation in its successive stages, but also to the power of the state organizations to uproot and redirect every facet of economic activity, and of course-what must never be underestimated-the development of the conditions for economic, cultural and psychological maturity in the individuals who make up society.

It is the consideration of gradual development and its future horizons that led Saddam Hussein to say: "To permit free enterprise and private ownership of property within the limits allowed by the implementation of Baathist socialism at the same time as rejecting exploitation, necessitates a continual rethinking of the extent and type of private ownership in accordance with the canons acceptable to socialism at the different stages of development. The Revolution assumes the heavy burden of guaranteeing a permanent balance between the requirements of socialist change and the requirements of preventing a particular segment from going beyond their prescribed limits (8)."

The state cannot be neutral if it is dedicated to the socialist process, in contrast to the capitalist state, which is always in the absolute service of the capitalists and plays no part in bettering the conditions of the majority when this conflicts with the interests of the oppressive classes.

"When the struggle is over and the socialist structure has been completed, it becomes the state of all the people (9)".

Yet there remains another question of great importance. This is not concerned with the nature of socialism in general, as the Arab Baath Socialist Party led by Saddam Hussein is struggling to build it, or with the nature of a party founded to achieve Arab unity. It is concerned with the practical conditions and the possibilities which must be provided to build Arab socialism in the light of the present fragmentation of the Arab World and its human and economic resources, and the proliferation of competing centres in different Arab lands, while Arab wealth is split among markets that are closed.

The question is, what is the relation between the practicalities of socialist change in Iraq and the practicalities of building Arab unity? Is it possible to achieve the essentials of socialism-at least, as the Baath Party understands it-without achieving unity? Put more bluntly-can socialism be built in one part of the Arab World-Iraq?

Saddam Hussein has considered this essential question and devoted himself to it, 'On Establishing Socialism in One Arab Area', which is an original contribution to Baathist thought. How did he answer it?

"The position of the Party on this question is that Socialism should spread to its full extent, and its powerful potential should be realized in the face of world developments. In the same way it should provide the material and spiritual possibilities for development at the behest of the leadership of the Arab Revolution. The struggle to achieve unity must accompany the struggle to build socialism. But is it possible at this stage to implement Socialism in any Arab country we choose, merely by providing the political will to achieve socialism? The answer

is, socialism in its broad sense cannot be implemented in any single Arab country. It can only be implemented in the context of the national struggle (10)."

But could socialism be built inside Iraq while continuing the struggle for Arab unity at the same time? The answer: "Yes. Socialism can be established in the Iraq area by the leadership of the Arab Baath Socialist Party while keeping the national struggle firmly in view. In this way the implementation of socialism becomes one of the central features in strengthening the factors that aid the national struggle for unity in two ways:

1) By preparing human and material resources to strengthen the effective forces for the struggle on the one hand.

2) By creating the necessary programme to reverse our centralist ideology so that it can be at the disposal of the leaders of liberation and socialism in the Arab struggle on the other hand (11)."

All the same, is it possible to realize all our goals within a limited geographical area, or only those parts of them that are possible? What is the extent of the "possible"?

The answer: "The establishment of socialism within Iraq is possible and necessary. But it is not adequate to give a model of the goal we desire in the whole Arab homeland. And it cannot cover all the material possibilities for true independence in a world of large international blocks. Our answer must be a repudiation of whatever goes beyond our conception of, and our programme for implementing, socialism and building a strong Arab state free of oppression and class structure. Our centralist politics exist to seize total independence and reject submission to the political and economic policies of foreign powers (12)."

Saddam Hussein's intellectual standpoint on these questions is absolutely clear. It consists of the realization of the possible within the present state of affairs. Its starting point is the contradiction of the present from a revolutionary perspective that struggles to overcome these contradictions and provide a revolutionary solution to them. He is striving now to realize his "programme" within the confines of his geographical area, which he hopes will provide an advance over experiments in other Third World countries and the Arab homeland. Even though he is causing Iraq to move economically and socially, he is well aware that the developments within Iraq are not the ultimate goal; but they are necessary in order to achieve a united, democratic and socialist Arab society.

There is no doubt that building socialism within one area of the Arab World does not imply an abandonment of the struggle for unity, just as the achievement of unity would not imply the abandonment of the struggle for socialism. Rather, the building of socialism is the building of one of the theoretical and practical foundations for unity in its deepest sense.

"The poets, writers and broadcasters have made no real progress in achieving Arab unity, so the courses of action that are effective have become particularly important.

For this reason the plans we have made for our dealings with the younger Arab countries must be seen with particular attention, and require a special sort of sacrifice, for they can polarize the vast Arab masses in circumstances such as the present when the pulpits spread falsehood and deception. It is true to say that we come closer to the unity of the whole Arab nation by increasing our sacrifices and support for the national struggle. The success of our democratic and socialist experiment is an expression of our Party's philosophy (13)."

Such, then, is Saddam Hussein's conception of socialism and Arab unity, which he has expressed with clarity and revolutionary sincerity. He has gone on to raise the pillars of its house on strong foundations. Socialism is not merely a beautiful dream. It is study, hard work, sweat and struggle. The path in front of it is not strewn with roses. The Iraq which was handed over to him was backward and belonged to that sleeping world which lived for long under foreign domination while the imperialists plundered its wealth and transported it to the West to make luxury goods for Western society. Consumption in America and Europe depends on continued production, but only leaves very little behind it in the Third World, where most of the people are poor and degraded. After hunger, ignorance, toil, disease and political and social repression they will have Paradise after death. But they do not have

dominion over the earth. How can socialism be built and achieve its full flower without wealth? How can there be a raising of living standards in building the new social economy without a raising of the average social wage? This is because "if the basic question in industrial countries is the problem of distribution of wealth, that in the sleeping countries is the problem of the creation of wealth (14)".

It is true that among Arab countries Iraq is not poor in raw materials. It swims over a gigantic lake of petrol, which is now the most important form of wealth in our modern world. But it did not own this wealth, which belonged to foreigners. It was as though Iraq was about to die of thirst while lying beside a spring, because it was unable to stretch out its hands to the water. And its hands were fettered by colonialism.

Saddam Hussein had to act with courage to free the wealth of his country. He cut its bonds so that it could quench its thirst from the spring.

Notes

1) Saddam Hussein, *Nahnu Mutawadhi'un bi-duni Dha'f wa Aqwiya' bi-duni Churnr* (We are modest without weakness and strong without vanity), Baghdad, Dar al-Huriyya, 1976, pp. 9-12.

2) Qadhaya al-Khilaf fil-Hizb ash-Shuyu'i as-Suri (The Issues of Controversy in The Syrian Communist Party), a collection of documents, Beirut, 1972, Dar Ibn Khaldun, p. 97.

3) Saddam Hussein, *al-Melkiyya al-Khassa wa Masuliyat ad-Dawla* (Private Ownership and The Responsibility of the State), Baghdad, Dar al-Thawra, 1978, p. 10.

4) Ibid. p. 15.

5) Ibid. pp. 10-11.

6) Ibid. p. 14.

7) Ibid. p. 15.

8) Ibid. pp. 17-18.

9) Ibid. p. 23.

10) Saddam Hussein, *Hawla Iqamat al-Ishtirakiyya fi Qutr Arabi Wahid* (On establishing Socialism in one Arab Country), address in The Information Bureau published by the magazine, *Afaq Arabiyya*, Baghdad.

11) Ibid.

12) Ibid.

13) Ibid.

14) Ibid.